Caring for Yourself or a Family Member

This information is part of the MaineHealth Living Well with COPD patient education book.

SECTION 8

Nutrition

In This Section:

• Staying at a Healthy Weight
• Dividing Your Plate
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• Meals
• Glossary

This book was created for patients and their families to help them manage their lung disease.

Your doctor or nurse chose this section because they felt it would be most helpful for you.

There are 10 sections in the COPD book and a list of definitions in the glossary section. Share this information with family, friends and those who help care for you.

MaineHealth
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Nutrition
Staying at a Healthy Weight

Staying at a healthy weight is an important part of managing your COPD. Ask your doctor or nurse what you should weigh.

A healthy weight helps you:

- breathe easier
- keep your muscles strong
- fight off infections

COPD makes you use more energy to breathe. You may need to eat and drink many more calories each day than a person without COPD. A lack of appetite, depression or not feeling well can cause you to become underweight.

**Being underweight can cause:**

- weakness
- feeling tired
- more frequent lung infections

**To gain weight, try eating and drinking:**

- whole grain breads and cereals
- fresh fruits and vegetables
- high-fat proteins like whole milk, cheese, yogurt and nuts
- high-protein shakes to add calories between meals

**Being overweight can cause:**

- your heart and lungs to work harder
- your breathing to be more difficult
- an increased need for oxygen

**To lose weight, try eating and drinking:**

- more fresh fruits and vegetables than bread and pasta
- low-fat proteins such as lean meats and low-fat dairy products
Dividing Your Plate

**Fruits and vegetables:**
Make half your plate fruits and vegetables. Try different kinds and colors of vegetables and fruits. Add slightly more vegetables to your plate than fruit.

**Grains:**
Make at least half of your grains whole grains, such as whole wheat bread and pasta, or brown rice. This will help you stay regular and healthy.

**Protein:**
Choose a variety of protein foods, such as fish, lean poultry or lean meat. Beans and other legumes are also good choices.

**Dairy:**
Dairy products include milk, cheese and yogurt.

Talk with your doctor or nurse or a registered dietician to better understand your nutritional needs.

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**tips**

1. Skip sugary drinks. Most have a lot of calories with little or no nutritional value. Choose water or milk instead.

2. Stop eating before you feel full.

3. Watch your portions. Eat at home as much as possible and use the plate picture to help guide you. Check food labels for portion size.

4. Avoid trendy diets. Anything that sounds too good to be true probably is.

5. Get at least 30 minutes of physical activity 5 days of the week.

6. Vitamin pills and other supplements should not replace a healthy diet. The best way to get vitamins is through the foods you eat.
What Foods Should I Eat Less Often?

These foods will make it hard for you to maintain a healthy weight:

- diet foods and drinks
- sweets, such as cookies, cakes, pies and sugary drinks

**Foods with a lot of added salt like:**

- processed foods such as cold cuts and bacon
- canned soups and vegetables
- microwave foods with high sodium (salt)

**Foods that may cause gas**

Some foods may cause gas and bloating and make it harder for you to breathe. Limit how much you eat or drink of these items:

- caffeinated drinks such as soda, coffee and tea
- carbonated drinks
- melons
- cucumbers
- radishes
- peppers
- beans
- broccoli
- cauliflower
- cabbage
- brussels sprouts
- onions
- fried foods
Meals

When preparing meals:
- Rest before preparing a meal.
- Sit down while preparing meals.
- When preparing a meal, make extra to freeze and use on a day when you do not feel well.
- Choose foods that don’t require a lot of chewing and are easy to prepare.
- Rest after a meal; clean up after resting.
- Include foods from all food groups at each meal.

Tips

For Enjoying Mealtime

1. Eat 5 to 6 small meals per day, rather than 3 large ones.
2. Eat your main meal early in the day; this will boost your energy levels for the whole day.
3. Use oxygen (if prescribed) while you eat.
4. Use your quick-relief (rescue) inhaler (if prescribed) 15-20 minutes before meals.
5. Eat with friends or family.
6. Try not to drink too much with your meal so you have more room for nutritious foods.
Advance directives (sometimes called living wills): forms that you fill out once you decide what is important to you if you should get into a health crisis

Air trapping: when it is difficult to exhale completely

Allergic rhinitis: runny nose caused by allergies

Alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency: a genetic disease that can cause COPD

Alveoli: air sacs

Arteries: blood vessels that carry oxygenated blood away from the heart to the body’s cells, tissues and organs

Arterial blood gas (ABG): a blood test from an artery that measures how well your lungs are able to move oxygen into your blood and remove carbon dioxide from your blood

Asbestos: mineral that can be woven into fabrics and is used in fire-resistant and insulating materials such as brake linings

Bone density test: x-ray that measures bone loss

Bronchial tubes: air passages or airways

Bronchodilators: medicines that make you breathe better by relaxing the muscles in your air passages and keep them from squeezing

Carbon dioxide: waste air

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation: emergency lifesaving procedure that is done when someone’s heart has stopped

Cataracts: clouding of the lens in your eye

Comorbidities: other chronic diseases a person has that make treating chronic disease more difficult

Continuous flow oxygen: oxygen that runs constantly through a tube into your nose and throat

Continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP): a device prescribed by a doctor or nurse to treat OSA

COPD Action Plan: a guide to help you recognize the early signs of a flare-up and what you should do when a flare-up occurs

Coronary arteries: blood vessels that supply oxygen-rich blood to your heart muscle

Coronary artery disease: a disease in which a waxy substance called plaque builds up inside your coronary arteries

Cor pulmonale: a condition that causes the right side of the heart to fail

CT scan: a picture of the inside of a part of your body

Diabetes: a condition in which your body does not make enough insulin or does not use insulin correctly

Diaphragm: a large muscle that sits below your lungs and does most of the work of breathing

Dose: amount of medicine

Echocardiogram: an ultrasound of the heart

Electrocardiogram: a test that checks for problems with the electrical activity of your heart

Energy conservation: saving energy

Esophagus: passage that connects the mouth and the stomach

Exacerbation: flare-up of your symptoms

Expectorant: medicine that loosens mucus so it’s easier to cough up

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD): acid reflux

Glaucoma: a condition of increased pressure within your eyeball, causing gradual loss of sight

Healthcare agent: the person you want to speak for you if you cannot speak for yourself

Heart failure: a condition in which your heart can’t pump enough blood to meet your body’s needs

Hospice: care for people closer to the end of life who want their treatment focused on comfort

Hypertension: high blood pressure

Inflammatory: swelling

Inhaler: device that contains medicine as a mist or powder
Insulin: hormone that carries sugar into your cells so that it can be used for energy

Intravenous: in a vein

Long-acting (controller) medicines: medicines taken once or twice a day that prevent shortness of breath

Lung transplantation: surgically replacing one or both of your lungs

Lung volume reduction surgery: surgically removing diseased parts of one or both of your lungs

Mucolytics: medicines that break up mucus

Nebulizer: device that turns liquid medicine into mist

Nicotine replacement: medicines that replace the nicotine you do not get when you quit smoking

Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA): a condition that causes you to have periods when you stop breathing during sleep

Osteoarthritis: mechanical wear and tear on joints

Osteoporosis: illness that makes your bones brittle and fragile

Oxygenated: combined or mixed with oxygen

Palliative care: care provided at any stage of an illness focused on preventing suffering, managing symptoms and coordinating communication between the many caregivers

Peripheral vascular/arterial disease: a condition of the blood vessels that supply the legs and feet. It leads to narrowing and hardening of the arteries. This causes decreased blood flow, which can injure nerves and other tissues.

Pneumonia: lung infection

Pollutants: waste materials that are harmful to air, soil or water

Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST): a medical order stating a patient’s wishes regarding treatments that are commonly used in a medical crisis

Pulmonary hypertension: high blood pressure in the arteries of the lungs

Pulse dose oxygen: oxygen that flows when you breathe in through your nose and stops when you breathe out

Pulse oximeter: a machine that measures the oxygen in your blood with a clip that goes on your finger, toe or earlobe

Quick-relief (rescue) medicine: medicine that starts to work in a few minutes and lasts a few hours

Reflux: when stomach acid backs up and irritates the esophagus

Rheumatoid arthritis: when your immune system mistakenly attacks the lining of your joints, causing a painful swelling that can eventually result in joint deformity

Secondhand smoke: smoke from a burning cigarette, cigar, pipe or hookah

Silica: a very common mineral found in many materials common on construction sites, including soil, sand, concrete, masonry, rock, granite and landscaping materials. The dust created by cutting, grinding or drilling can cause lung disease and cancer.

Sinusitis: swelling of the air cavities within the passages of the nose. Sinusitis can be caused by infection, but also can be caused by allergies and irritation of the sinuses.

Spirometry: a test to see how well your lungs are working

Sputum: mucus in your lungs

Stroke: when blood flow to an area of your brain is cut off

Suppressant: medicine to help you cough less

Thirdhand smoke: tobacco particles that stay on surfaces long after burning tobacco has been put out

Thrush: infection of the mouth and throat

Trachea: windpipe

Ultrasound: a test that uses sound waves to see inside your body

Vaping devices: electronic cigarettes, cigars and pipes that produce steam vapor when smoked